

VZCZCXRO5877
OO RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHFR #1790 1241453
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 041453Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6957
INFO RUEHAE/AMEMBASSY ASMARA IMMEDIATE 0359
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE 2002
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0749
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1226

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 001790

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/14/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ER](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: FRANCE BACKS EUROPEAN ENGAGEMENT WITH ERITREA

REF: A. STATE 59532 B. PARIS 848

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah B. Rosenblatt. Reas
ons 1.4b,d

11. (C) France supports EU and EC efforts to engage Eritrea, including the invitation by the European Commission for President Isaias Afwerki to visit Brussels, MFA AF DAS-Equivalent Helen Le Gal informed Africa Watcher on May 3 in response to demarche (Ref A). Le Gal remarked that the invitation to Brussels was well within European Commission norms, which only barred a visit by Zimbabwean President Mugabe.

12. (C) Eritrea was emerging as a regional force, with influential and valuable networks, in the French and EC view, Le Gal stated, adding that Asmara's clout was growing in response to Ethiopian activities. Regarding Darfur, Eritrean knowledge of and involvement with rebel groups was incontestable, she remarked. UN Envoy Eliasson was striving, eyes open, to bring together the UN and Eritrean poles; convergence of some sort was vital to advancing coherence among the rebels. Le Gal volunteered that Presidential Adviser Yemane Gebremeskel had recently been to Paris, and had made a strong impression.

13. (C) Eritrea, with its egregious violations of human rights, infringement of religious freedom, and disrespect for the Vienna Conventions was doubtless a repressive and authoritarian state, whose actions were reminiscent of the Soviet Union, Le Gal commented. The MFA, in a national capacity, had issued trenchant criticisms of unacceptable Eritrean behavior. The French Government, she added, had just granted political asylum to a persecuted Eritrean journalist. French embassy personnel, she added, also had difficulty obtaining permission to leave Asmara, although she allowed that Asmara meted out particularly harsh treatment to the USG.

14. (C) Le Gal noted that France had invited Isaias to the February Africa-France Summit in Cannes, but the Eritrean President declined, not wanting to run the risk of a corridor encounter with Ethiopian President Meles. (Note: France refused an offer by Isaias to travel to Cannes exclusively to attend a side-meeting on Darfur, without taking part in the broader Africa-France Summit (Ref B).)

15. (C) Comment: Le Gal was unflinching in her view that Brussels was correct and within its rights to broaden engagement with Asmara.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

